

## Dinner Party by dontpanicgetatowel

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**Genre:** Bad Anger Management Runs In The Family, Established Relationship, Family Secrets, Other, POV Maxine "Max" Mayfield

**Language:** English

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**Summary:**

Max wants Billy to come with her to their parents' house for Christmas.

Billy doesn't want that.

## Dinner Party

### Author's Note:

See endnotes for TW

I wrote this in one evening and \*exhausted me\* has decided it was good enough to post. We'll see if morning me agrees.

Max and Lucas are invited to Steve and Billy's apartment for a dinner party tonight. It's November and Max wants to coax Billy into spending Christmas with her and their parents back in Hawkins. Last year he didn't go and the year before that pretty harsh words were thrown on both sides, which wasn't that different from all the other Christmases they spent together. But last year without Billy was really uncomfortable and Max dreads going back alone.

It's a good thing Steve's made Bolognese tonight. It gets Billy all soft and mushy. So Max waits for him to be all satiated and happy until she can bring it up, meanwhile chatting about her and Lucas's wedding plans for the summer.

Then when they start eating the fruit salad Billy made, Max throws the topic on the table.

"So. You're coming for Christmas this year, right? I don't wanna be alone like last time, it was kind of awkward."

Billy looks startled, then his eyes harden.

"No."

Max looks at him for a second, waiting for him to elaborate. But he doesn't.

"What, just no?"

"That's right."

"Why? You two can't stay mad forever! It's your dad!"

Billy narrows his eyes at her, his voice starting to raise.

“The fuck I can! It’s my fucking life!”

Max sighs heavily, looking at the ceiling before coming back into combat. Billy’s already being a bitch about it. Her voice sharpens too.

“Dude! It’s literally one day in a year! Can’t you just tone it down once a year?”

“The fuck d’you mean Max? Too faggy for their taste, I don’t give a fuck!”

Billy’s getting red with anger. And Max knows she is too.

“I didn’t mean that! I was talking about your fucking asshole behavior every time!”

“I wouldn’t need to be an asshole if he wasn’t one in the first place!”

Here it is. Every time. Billy’s dad is a stuck up tyrant but Billy’s always been a dickhead. He could make the fucking effort like one day every 52 weeks.

Max scoffs. She doesn’t mean to shout but the blood pulsing in her ears makes it harder to hear herself.

“Come on! Can’t you just forget that and try to get along one fucking time in the year? I just want a nice family Christmas for once in my life!”

“I don’t care what you want shitbird! I won’t waste one more day of my life with this fucker and you can’t fucking make me!”

“Guys-”

Steve’s looking up at her and Billy with a wariness in his tone, and, okay, Max hadn’t noticed they were both standing up now. He shuts up when both of them turn their murderous blue eyes towards him.

Max throws her hands up. Now she’s straight up shouting.

“Fuck, Billy! Why d’you always have to be so difficult?”

Billy scoffs in apparent disbelief. His eyes are getting wilder by the second.

“Why do I- Fuck you! Why d’you always have to take his *fuckin* side!”

And- Max stops *right there*. Because Billy’s eyes just welled up. His voice just cracked. And it’s cracking again.

“Fuck you!”

And he steps right out of the living room to the balcony, leaving her rooted on the spot.

Lucas’s muted voice sounds too loud compared to the moment it broke.

“What- is happening?”

Steve quickly gets up after coming to his senses.

“I’m gonna check up on him.”

And he’s gone too mere seconds after that.

Lucas is right. What the *fuck* is happening.

She briskly moves to the balcony door.

The fuck. Steve’s got his hands on Billy’s shoulders murmuring soft words, and Billy is shaking. Max’s voice is blank. Max’s mind is blank.

“What is going on?”

Billy doesn’t meet her gaze. He weakly scoffs, then just shakes his head no. This reignites Max’s fierceness.

“Oh, no, you’re telling me what’s going on, Billy. You never cried in front of me, *ever* in my life. What is going on?”

“Shut up Max. You wouldn’t even believe me.”

Billy is never that quiet. He never shuts the fuck up. What the hell is wrong with him?

“Try me, dickhead!”

Then Steve whispers something to Billy’s ear, squeezing his shoulders, making his eyes screw up shut then open again.

Billy takes a shuddering breath, then sighs.

“He’s been an asshole to me, Max. Not just regular asshole, okay?”

Steve intervenes again, this time in Max’s earshot.

“Say the proper word, Billy. Not just asshole.”

Billy looks up, his jaw clenching again, hard.

“He was- an abusive piece of shit with me, as soon as my mom was too far away to be his fucking punching bag anymore, okay?”

This- Max never expected this. She has just enough self-awareness to get inside before she sees red. Her eyes well up but not from fucking sadness. She’s vibrating with so much rage she could kill someone right now. Preferably Neil Fucking Hargrove.

Why the fuck did he never tell? Why the fuck hasn’t she noticed before? And who the FUCK does Neil Hargrove think he is? Did her mom know?

“Hey, is he-”

“I’m getting out.”

“Wh- d’you want me to take our thing? I thought-”

“I’m coming back, okay? I just need a fucking minute!”

Lucas takes a step back towards the table.

“Okay.”

She runs down the stairs in a daze, her vision blurred by tears of rage when she gets out of the building. And she's trembling and she feels out of her fucking skin and she needs a fucking outlet. So she punches the brick wall. Once. Twice. Seven. Twelve times. And when it's all out her knuckles are bloody and her wrist hurts so fucking bad. And that's where the true sobs arrive.

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She doesn't know for how long she's stayed there ugly crying until Lucas comes out of the building too.

"Hey, I just- wanted to check on you..." His voice turns from soft to alarmed "What happened to your hand?"

Lucas tells her it's badly swollen and rushes back inside to tell Steve and Billy so they can go to the E.R. with Steve's car. No one says a word during the whole car ride until they get in front of the hospital and Steve tells them to go inside while he parks the car. Lucas sits by her side to fill the paperwork while they wait and Billy sits by her other side.

Her wrist is so swollen she doesn't wait that long and the hours spent doing the x-ray, the orthopedist examination and the cast are all a blur. When she's allowed to leave, the three boys are waiting for her, and they silently get back in the car.

Lucas tentatively puts a hand on her shoulder, and her shoulders sag. Billy's looking at her from the front seat.

"You okay?"

Her eyes screw shut.

"I'm sorry... I'm sorry I left, I just- I was so angry and- I didn't wanna latch out on you."

Billy smiles a little. Hell, he of all people should know the feeling.

"It's okay."

Max's tears spill out at that when she thought she hadn't any left to

begin with.

“No... It’s not okay. I’m so fucking stupid. I didn’t even notice.”

“Shut up, Max, you’re not stupid. You were a fucking child, okay?”

There’s a moment of silence in the car. Max breaks it.

“*You* were a fucking child.”

She can’t believe she’s being childish about this.

“Doesn’t matter. It’s not your fault. And it’s not mine. It’s this asshole’s fucking fault and I’m never seeing his face again.”

Max presses her back deeper into the backseat, anger blooming back inside her cheeks.

“Me neither.”

**Author's Note:**

TW:mentions of abuse; self-harm